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Aboriginal women and youth main topics of FPTA meeting in Iqaluit (02/11/27)

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FREDERICTON (CNB) -- Increasing economic opportunities for aboriginal women and youth, and housing and education are key priorities for improving aboriginal participation in the economy.

Justice Minister Brad Green, Minister responsible for Aboriginal Affairs, today gave a report on the meeting of federal, provincial and territorial aboriginal affairs ministers and national aboriginal leaders, held Nov. 7-8 in Iqaluit, Nunavut.

"Through our discussions and deliberations in Iqaluit, the assembled aboriginal leaders and ministers reaffirmed our commitment to this FPTA process and the importance of continuing dialogue between aboriginal organizations and governments to further improve the quality of life of aboriginal peoples," Green said.

In the latest of a continuing series of meetings, federal, provincial and territorial Ministers responsible for Aboriginal Affairs and the leaders of the five national aboriginal organizations met to discuss more concrete ways to strengthen aboriginal participation in the economy, particularly the participation of aboriginal women and youth. The leaders and ministers directed officials to focus efforts on developing entrepreneurship opportunities for aboriginal women.

The leaders and ministers also approved two practical tools to permit greater participation of aboriginal women in the economy.

The first, the Aboriginal Women's Business Planning Guide, will be ready in the spring of 2003. Drawing on the experiences of successful aboriginal women entrepreneurs, the guide will provide a step-by-step approach to the basics of establishing and launching a business.

The second tool will be a comprehensive federal/provincial/territorial and aboriginal resource guide. This guide will list employment and entrepreneurship programs and services available to aboriginal women.

"The resource guide will help aboriginal women take better advantage of programs and services offered by all levels of government," Green said.

In the spirit of the ongoing National Aboriginal Youth Strategy, leaders and ministers endorsed the National Aboriginal Organizations Youth Committee (NAOYC). The committee will advise and work

through the FPTA Working Group on the development and implementation of aboriginal youth programs and services and to put in place the principles of the youth strategy at the community and regional levels.

The leaders and ministers also agreed to host a National Business Summit, to be held in Toronto on Feb. 19-20, 2003. The summit will focus on the importance of developing business partnerships to help aboriginal communities become economically stronger and more self-reliant.

Green said the ministers and leaders reaffirmed their commitment to the FPTA process and the importance of continuing dialogue between aboriginal organizations and governments to further improve the quality of life of aboriginal peoples. They identified housing and education as priorities to address at their next meeting, scheduled for fall 2003 in Ottawa.

"This is an ongoing process, but a very important one, as we continue to work in partnership with aboriginal communities and all levels of government to strengthen and support aboriginal participation in the economy in New Brunswick and throughout our country," he said.

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